United Nations E/2004/SR.21

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
22 July 2004

Original: English

Substantive session of 2004
High-level segment

Summary record of the 21st meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 30 June 2004, at 3 p.m.

President: Ms. Risa ..... (Finland)
later: Mr. Penjo (Vice-President) ..... (Bhutan)
later: Ms. Risa (President) ..... (Finland)

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04-40867 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Resources mobilization and enabling environment for poverty eradication in the context of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010 (*continued*) (A/58/722-E/2004/13, E/2004/33, 54, 75 (chap. I) and 84, E/2004/CRP.1 and Add.1 and E/2004/NGO/1-22)

1. **Mr. Ivanou** (Observer for Belarus) welcomed the theme chosen for the high-level segment, since successful implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action could serve to accomplish the Millennium Goals, particularly those aimed at combating poverty and the spread of HIV/AIDS. He congratulated the Bureau and President of the Economic and Social Council for having organized informal preparatory meetings, at which ministers from the least developed countries had met with those responsible for development matters in various United Nations entities not only to determine the most pressing problems facing the modern world but also to exchange views on the most promising ways of achieving progress

2. Of the 50 least developed countries, only seven had achieved the growth rate of 7 per cent a year necessary to halve poverty by the year 2015, and without a stronger representation in international trade those countries could never achieve faster growth. That would require investment and modern technology, and so the issue of financing was important. While there was consensus that mobilizing internal resources was the most important way to finance development, the least developed countries clearly needed technical assistance on how best and most rationally to do so. The Bretton Woods institutions, UNDP country offices and United Nations regional economic commissions were best suited to supply such assistance. Least developed countries' own initiatives should also be supported, such as Bangladesh's proposals to develop microcredit systems in the developing world.

3. Between 2000 and 2002, the proportion of long-term foreign capital invested in least developed countries had increased from 4.7 to 7.4 per cent, reaching in absolute terms a figure of US$ 17 billion. However, vast needs and challenges still faced the least developed countries. As the report of the Secretary-General pointed out, for many of them official development assistance (ODA) remained such an important source of finance that the international donor community and United Nations system must continue to envisage increasing the volume of ODA. It was also important to establish partnerships between least developed countries and donor States, along with the relevant international organizations, in order to further the progress of the former in the management of their external debt.

4. The latest initiatives by the European Union and the United States to make larger markets more accessible to goods from the least developed countries were to be welcomed, and to that end Belarus had decided to offer preferential tariffs to several States. Its National Centre for Technology Transfer was ready to cooperate with all interested countries. Belarus was also considering UNIDO's draft programme for technology transfer between the CIS and Central and Latin America, under which Belarus could offer expertise in high-technology disciplines.

5. In the light of repeated statements from developing and least developed countries that a 1 per cent slower growth rate in Europe or the United States led to a drop of 2 to 3 per cent in the developing countries, it was clear that one of the most effective mechanisms in the Brussels Programme of Action was for all States, regardless of their level of development, to adopt rational macroeconomic policies which would stimulate the economy, attract investment and create employment. The United Nations system should lead the world in a collective awareness of responsibilities and interdependence in that sphere.

6. **Mr. Rahman** (Malaysia) said that the mobilization of resources remained one of the pressing issues. In addition to the normal sources of financing, countries must turn to innovative solutions such as microfinancing.

7. Partners in the developed countries must fulfil their obligations to meet the pledged ODA target without tying it to any conditions. Implementation of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative had to be accelerated, for almost two thirds of the least developed countries had unsustainable levels of external indebtedness.

8. At a time when economic growth depended largely on trade, the combined figure of 50 least developed countries with a population of over 600 million people represented a pathetic 1 per cent of total global trade. The developed partners must therefore

provide market access to the least developed countries' exports by removing all trade barriers and eliminating subsidies that marginalized their agricultural products. At the same time, the streamlined, non-discriminatory accession of the least developed countries to the World Trade Organization (WTO), taking into account their different stages of development, would help eradicate poverty and promote sustainable development.

9. The least developed countries themselves were responsible for creating an environment conducive to economic growth so as to attract foreign direct investment and promote domestic investment, by removing bureaucratic obstacles, doing away with inefficient practices and adopting consistent, non-discriminatory legislation that ensured property rights. They must mobilize domestic resources through savings, taxation and sourcing of financial markets. Of course, the least developed countries were constrained by the conditionalities imposed by international bodies, which were inconsistent with internationally agreed targets, as well as by internal institutional limitations. The success of the Brussels Programme of Action depended on the fulfilment of international commitments coupled with concerted efforts on the part of the least developed countries themselves.

10. **Ms. Cronenberg-Mossberg** (Sweden) said that her Government would soon be distributing its first report on the Millennium Development Goals for 2004, in order to highlight its commitment to the issues involved and to stimulate national and international debate on them. The report presented Sweden's new global development policy, and gave examples of Swedish contributions to achieving the Goals, especially that of environmentally sustainable development and of actions to be undertaken by the high-income countries. The areas specifically covered were ODA, more effective development cooperation, an open trading and financial system, a sustainable debt burden, productive work for young people in developing countries, access to health care and information and communications technologies, access by migrants to transfers of money and knowledge, foreign direct investment, development cooperation and training carried out by Swedish civil and non-governmental organizations, and global public goods. The report highlighted the particular importance for the least developed countries of fair trade, debt relief, aid efficiency and job creation.

11. **Mr. Zenna** (Observer for Ethiopia) noted that the challenges faced by the least developed countries, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, as they sought to realize the objectives of the Brussels Programme of Action and the Millennium Development Goals had been daunting, and required mobilization of resources. As one such country, Ethiopia had designed a four-pronged development strategy: a policy based on the development of rural areas, where 85 per cent of its population and the majority of its poor lived and worked; a reform of the justice system and the civil service to ensure property rights and proper functioning of public services; empowerment of the people by shifting decision-making to the grass roots and improving accountability and service delivery; and capacity-building through investment in education and other public and private sectors. To improve the mobilization of resources, Ethiopia was reforming the management of public expenditure and tracking poverty-related expenditures, and instituting tax reform. The Government had set up a legal and policy framework to expand microfinancing institutions and cooperative rural savings and credit societies, and the Development Bank of Ethiopia had developed a financial assistance programme geared to millions of rural households. As a result, the marked improvement in the country's business environment had been internationally recognized. Ethiopia, in partnership with other Governments and domestic private partners, had also launched a much-needed food security programme.

12. Despite increased aid flows and more coordinated delivery of aid to the least developed countries, the volume of ODA still fell short of the agreed targets that should provide the necessary underpinning for national development and poverty reduction strategies.

13. There had been welcome initiatives by the European Union, the United States and other international partners to increase the access of the least developed countries to global markets, but they had to be complemented by an enhancement of their capacity to supply the markets. Their dependency on the production of commodities must be reduced, because such products were notoriously vulnerable to fluctuating prices and unfavourable terms of trade, and the countries were forced to defer their development and poverty reduction efforts.

14. Just as the least developed countries had to create a conducive environment for trade, their development

partners had to encourage businesses to invest in them. Transfer of knowledge and technology was therefore crucial. Commitments on both sides would ensure the success of the agreed development goals.

15. **Ms. Ndiaye** (Observer, International Organization for Migration (IOM)) said that migration issues, involving the movement of people and access to job markets, had to be dealt with in international partnership but always taking into account the interests of the countries concerned. The focus should be on the potential contribution of migrants to the economic and social advancement of both their countries of residence and their countries of origin.

16. It should be noted that, rather than taking action to forestall the impact of a brain drain on the lasting development of developing countries, the member countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) had in recent years been increasing their recruitment of qualified professionals from the least developed countries.

17. IOM was working to enhance the personal and professional mobility of migrants. They could, in particular, undertake temporary expert missions for the benefit of their country of origin in sectors lacking quality supervision, help their Governments to achieve a better geographical distribution of skills within the country, and take part in transfer of skills programmes using the new information and communication technologies. That would help to balance human capital flows towards the Western economies, and would considerably improve the image of migrants and their social integration into their countries of residence while contributing to the sustainable development of their countries of origin.

18. IOM encouraged bilateral development agreements between countries in conjunction with concerted measures to assist communities of origin and measures protecting the rights of migrant workers and their families. Its hope was that the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, which had entered into force in 2003, would receive broad acceptance.

19. The funds sent back by migrants to their countries of origin were another positive aspect, often representing a sizeable proportion of the countries' foreign currency resources, and had been estimated at $90 billion in 2003. A coordinated effort must be made to reduce transfer costs and establish safe and simple procedures for migrants who wished to invest some of their savings in remittances that created jobs and generated income in their home countries. A combination of ODA, foreign direct investment and private money remittances from migrants was needed to enable the least developed countries to advance along the path of development in a context of good governance.

20. **Mr. Ramadan** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that the choice of the theme of the current high-level segment was indicative of the international community's commitment to combating poverty and eradicating hunger. It meant that the international community and all partners must abide by their commitments and required the mobilization of financial, human and institutional resources and the creation of partnerships at all levels, including between the private and public sectors.

21. International trade had an important role to play in mobilizing the resources of the least developed countries (LDCs) as a more stable source of foreign exchange. However, the low level and instability of world prices of basic commodities, on which those countries relied, especially in Africa, tended to undermine the ability of international trade to operate as a driver of development and poverty elimination. In addition, the relative inability of those countries to increase supply, coupled with growing transport costs, trade barriers and increased support for competitive commodities, had tended to weaken their exports and consequently limited their ability to generate the necessary income for growth and development.

22. He hoped the Council's discussions would yield results and recommendations conducive to the creation of new and additional resources and increased ODA for LDCs to support their national anti-poverty and comprehensive-development programmes. In that connection, he emphasized that the ministerial declaration to be adopted by the high-level segment of the current session should include: reaffirmation of commitments and pledges for the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010; determination to create an enabling environment at the local and international levels and find new ways to generate resources to facilitate implementation of the Programme of Action by 2010; encouragement of advanced countries to reverse the downward trend in

ODA, to permit the attainment of the desired goals; emphasis on the provision of the necessary funding and accelerated implementation of the HIPC Initiative; the welcoming of market-access initiatives in favour of LDCs and an appeal to all their trading partners to remove customs barriers and quotas that stood in the way of the exports of those countries; a commitment to strengthening partnerships between countries, multilateral institutions and civil society and related regional and subregional cooperation; emphasis on the importance of constant follow-up to guarantee the implementation of decisions taken in this area.

23. **Mr. Belinga-Eboutou** (Observer for Cameroon) said that for many countries the challenge of development was synonymous with that of nation-building, requiring institutional and administrative solutions essential to the creation of a viable and dynamic economy integrated into the global system. Shifts in the international environment thus often created constraints on a country's process of domestic political maturation. Nevertheless, the developing countries had decided to play the game of globalization in the hope that it would enhance their performance and be a catalyst for strong and lasting economic growth.

24. The financing of their development remained the major challenge, and the international community must act effectively to find more appropriate funding mechanisms. The Millennium Declaration, the Brussels Programme of Action, the G-8 initiatives, and the mechanisms established by the third Tokyo International Conference on African Development and by the European Development Fund had been milestones in the expression of international solidarity in the mobilization of the resources needed for development. Recent British and Brazilian initiatives had also been welcome, and the Council must help them to take shape without diverting funds from established financial commitments.

25. Managing the debt of developing countries must continue to be a matter of international concern, for their fragile economies were being strangled by debt servicing. In addition, the heavily indebted countries needed substantial development aid and foreign direct investment. ODA could not be restricted to poverty reduction, but should be directed increasingly towards private investment, the true catalyst for growth.

26. The efforts of the developing countries to increase savings, prevent capital outflows and create a climate conducive to investment would be in vain if they were denied access for their exports to the international markets. The rules of international trade must be made more equitable.

27. The reduction of poverty was one of the major challenges in Cameroon, if it was to conserve social cohesion and the bases of its economic growth. It had thus developed a national poverty reduction strategy in conjunction with its business community and civil society and its development partners. The Government estimated that its implementation would require as much as $200 billion in assistance over the next three years. That would be a test of the international community's solidarity, in which Cameroon placed great hopes.

28. **Mr. Sardenberg** (Observer for Brazil) said that stronger efforts were required so that the least developed countries could achieve sustained growth, participate in the global economy on a more equitable footing and provide decent jobs for their workers; special attention should be paid to least developed countries emerging from conflicts. Brazil was in favour of giving the Council a stronger role, in closer cooperation with the Security Council, in addressing the transition from post-conflict peace-building to development. That approach had proved very useful in the cases of Guinea-Bissau and Burundi and it might also be useful in that of Haiti; his Government was committed to a long-term contribution to the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti.

29. The developing world had been quite successful in implementing sound domestic policies and structural reforms, but those measures did not produce immediate results in terms of growth and income and must be complemented by an enabling international economic environment. The international community had been successful in supporting and monitoring national macroeconomic and development efforts but had failed to ensure adequate resources or to promote opportunities for developing countries in global markets.

30. The Spirit of São Paulo declaration recognized the need for additional international resources and for new instruments and measures in the areas of trade and financing to support national policies and stressed that developing countries must have the necessary policy

space within their national development strategies in order to adopt policies that fostered innovation and the consolidation of dynamic sectors in a new geography of world trade and cooperation generated by new centres of growth in the South.

31. International efforts must also be refocused on long-term issues that hindered the least developed countries' progress towards sustained development: debt, volatile commodity prices and the need for increased, more stable access to global markets, especially for agricultural and labour-intensive products such as textiles. It was clear from the Cancún experience that the unity of those countries had changed the dynamics of multilateral negotiations; their diversity of interests must be respected, but it should not prevent them from pursuing their common objective of correcting distortions and fully integrating agriculture into the multilateral trading system, including by dismantling subsidies.

32. Progress in implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action required a concerted strategy by all partners; the developing world should forge consensus in the multilateral organizations and contribute to bilateral and multilateral arrangements. The launching of a third round of negotiations under the Global System of Trade Preferences among Developing Countries offered an opportunity to advance South-South trade and confer preferential treatment on the least developed countries.

33. Brazil was committed to further enhancing its cooperation and trade links with the least developed countries through bilateral arrangements, the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) and initiatives such as the India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA) Fund. It had also launched a Brazil-Africa initiative aimed at strengthening existing technical cooperation and identifying new opportunities in that area. His Government was therefore keenly interested in the mobilization of additional financial resources and appreciated the efforts of countries which had met or surpassed the established ODA targets; other States should follow that example. The meeting of world leaders to be held, at President Lula's invitation, on 20 September 2004 should contribute to the discussion of concrete proposals regarding new sources of financing for the poorest countries.

34. **Mr. Koonjul** (Mauritius) said that his delegation welcomed the increased ODA flows to least developed countries, initiatives aimed at enhancing market access to their exports, the European Union's "Everything but Arms" initiative and the extension to 2015 of the United States of America's Africa Growth and Opportunity Act. However, those improvements fell far short of the resources necessary for the least developed countries to emerge from the "poverty trap"; only seven of those countries had reached the critical 7 per cent growth rate and current trends suggested that most of them were unlikely to do so.

35. The primary responsibility for development rested with the least developed countries themselves, but their efforts must be supported by the international community in a spirit of shared partnership and interdependence. The governments of least developed countries could play a vital role in creating the necessary environment for the private sector to flourish; opportunities should be provided for the development of microbusinesses and small and medium-sized enterprises, which could reduce poverty and promote economic growth at the grass-roots level, through microcredit, cooperative unions, an emphasis on rural development and creation of an appropriate institutional and legal framework.

36. Development partners should also help the least developed countries create an enabling environment to attract foreign direct investment (FDI). His own country's experience in Mozambique and Madagascar had shown that, with sound economic management, peace and stability, the stage could be set for enhanced regional cooperation, investment and trade. He applauded the Norwegian Government's decision to grant duty- and quota-free access to its markets for all imports from the least developed countries and encouraged other developed countries to follow that example.

37. Debt sustainability was a critical condition for growth and development in the least developed countries; it was imperative for the HIPC Initiative to be fully implemented and development partners should consider a more robust debt sustainability framework.

38. He commended the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) African Peer Review Mechanism, which already included 19 African countries, and stressed the importance of ensuring a smooth transition for small island developing States (SIDS) that were being considered for graduation from the list of least developed countries; abrupt withdrawal

of support from the international community could reverse years of progress in those countries.

39. *Mr. Penjo (Bhutan), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

40. **Mr. Owuor** (Kenya) said that, given the nature of their economies, the least developed countries could not be expected to mobilize the domestic resources necessary to finance their development and would continue to depend on ODA, foreign investment, trade and external debt. Despite some improvement, the quality and quantity of ODA had not reached the level stipulated in the Brussels Programme of Action and in the outcome documents of other major United Nations conferences and summits. He urged donors to fulfil their commitments and stressed that all ODA to least developed countries should take the form of grants; higher ODA levels would help governments build the infrastructure necessary to attract FDI, currently concentrated in only a few countries.

41. Most developing countries had been unable to reap the benefits of international trade as a result of restricted access to the markets of developed countries and supply-side constraints. It was urgent to remove all trade-distorting subsidies by the developed countries, which should extend trade preferences to the developing, and especially the least developed, countries. Most low-income countries were dependent on one or a few commodities, the prices of which continued to decline. The international community should resolve the issue of commodity prices and price instability and assist the least developed countries in their efforts to diversify and add value to their products.

42. Measures adopted to deal with the external debt problem of developing countries had been ineffective; emphasis should be put on debt cancellation in order to ensure that the issue of the debt burden was fully resolved.

43. **Mr. Niang** (Senegal) said that, like many of the least developed countries, Senegal had achieved significant economic growth (6.5 per cent in 2003), stabilized prices and reduced its financial deficit to a sustainable level; as a result, the percentage of its people living in poverty had fallen from 67.9 per cent in 1994-1995 to 57.1 per cent in 2001-2002. His Government had also instituted a series of governance and financial management reforms designed to create a favourable environment for the private sector.

44. However, resource mobilization was essential; the least developed countries and their development partners must assume their common but differentiated responsibilities with respect to ODA, external debt, trade and the other areas covered by the Brussels Programme of Action. Innovative ODA measures were called for; he welcomed the launching of the Millennium Challenge Account and the International Finance Facility.

45. The least developed countries must also combat corruption, streamline administrative procedures and avoid waste in order better to absorb the ODA that they received; their partners, for their part, should continue to harmonize policies, unblock funds and increase the predictability of ODA, which should take the form of grants. Despite the benefits of the HIPC Initiative and the positive attitude of donors, who had recently cancelled a portion of Senegal's debt, it was clear that the current debt burden of the least developed countries was incompatible with the goal of halving the number of people living in poverty by 2015.

46. The exclusion of least developed countries could not be addressed without radical changes that would end the injustice and inequity of the global trading system; those countries and their development partners should address that issue in an "agricultural Davos conference".

47. **Mr. Makayat-Safouesse** (Republic of the Congo) said that the hopes raised at international conferences on the least developed countries had been dashed; the international community should fulfil its commitments under the Brussels Programme of Action and should provide assistance to those countries as they addressed the problems of market access, debt, inadequate capacities, insufficient financial resources and disease. His Government had taken a number of measures aimed at mobilizing domestic resources, including the development of a national plan to combat fraud and corruption, promotion of proper resource allocation, strengthening of its statistical machinery and the involvement of a wider range of partners.

48. **Mr. Gleckman** (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)) drew attention to the UNCTAD report entitled *Linking International Trade with Poverty Reduction* and said that the extreme poverty in most LDCs was not just the result of economic stagnation, but also the cause. For instance, when average per capita consumption was subtracted

from average per capita income for the period from 1995 to 1999, there remained only US$ 0.15 per person per day to spend on private capital formation, public infrastructure and the running of vital public services. The possibility for the mobilization of domestic resources was thus severely restricted, and UNCTAD therefore continued to stress the importance of external financing to complement the meagre domestic resources base.

49. The sharp decline in aid flows that had begun early in the 1990s had to some extent been reversed in 2000, but ODA to LDCs had been unpredictable and unstable. Foreign direct investment was concentrated in only a few countries and sectors. Ten LDCs had accounted for over 86 per cent of all foreign direct investment to such countries between 1998 and 2000, while the group as a whole had received only 1 per cent of all such investment. Concrete action beyond the conventional promotion activities, including exploring the use of ODA resources to fund innovative activities, was needed to attract foreign direct investment to LDCs.

50. Resources from debt relief should also be directed to the development of productive sectors and of trade, which would increase the coherence of the debt strategy. The debt stock of LDCs, which had declined between 1998 and 2001, had resurged in 2002 even though several countries had recently benefited from debt relief measures.

51. In the 1990s, the value of retail coffee sales — largely in industrialized countries — was approximately three times the amount earned by coffee-producing countries; currently, when producers' prices stood at the lowest level in 100 years, retail sales had exceeded US$ 70 billion while coffee-producing countries received only $5.5 billion. Commodity-producing LDCs were therefore not benefiting adequately from the value-addition chain.

52. UNCTAD continued to put LDCs at the centre of its programme of work, undertaking analytical studies of their economies and engaging in technical cooperation activities aimed at building their productive capacity in many areas.

53. Although national efforts should remain at the heart of the development of LDCs, such efforts alone would not succeed without an improvement in the international economic environment. There was an urgent need to support national objectives by channelling development aid into national budget processes and aligning project aid with national development objectives and priorities. The move by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development to untie aid to LDCs was welcome.

54. With regard to international trade, concrete actions were required to address market access and supply side constraints. Moreover, practices that undermined development efforts, such as agricultural subsidies, must be addressed. The potential of South-South trade should be fully realized: currently most exports from developing countries were destined for markets in industrialized countries, and LDCs could do more to diversify their markets and trading opportunities.

55. **Mr. Singh** (International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources) pointed out that environmental protection had received little attention during the Council's current session.

56. In general, pro-poor conservation strategies had failed to emerge because of a misrepresentation of the poverty-environment link. A common myth held that environmental degradation was inevitable when people moved from poverty to prosperity. Yet it was important to conserve biological assets, which were essential to maintaining sustainable livelihoods.

57. In eastern Africa, for example, community-based natural resource management and ecosystem restoration had led to increased crop yields and enhanced food security. Income from such activities was re-invested in village health care and education. Thus, while pro-poor conservation and sustainable use strategies might not be enough to lift people out of poverty, they could contribute significantly to poverty eradication programmes.

58. Concerns that handing over environmental assets to poor people would inevitably lead to further environmental degradation had not been borne out in practice. More often, when poor people were given decision-making authority over natural resources, even badly degraded ones, they turned them into productive assets. They might make mistakes, but they were far better placed to take note of them and to correct their management practices.

59. If poor people were to achieve secure rights to and responsibility for natural resources, Governments had to take several key steps such as: policy reform to

enable responsible community stewardship of natural resources; well-designed incentives and better information to promote better risk management; rewards for ecosystem stewardship; and strengthening of the capacity of environmental agencies and use of "publicly owned" natural resources.

60. **Ms. Sarlis** (Intergovernmental Institution for the Use of Micro-Alga Spirulina against Malnutrition) said that one of the consequences of severe malnutrition was the inability to digest ordinary food. What was needed to rehabilitate victims of malnutrition was a food rich in proteins and vitamins, easily mixed with cereals and easily digested, which could be easily stored for long periods. Among the various possibilities, micro-alga spirulina offered an excellent solution. Her organization had been established as a result of several intergovernmental conventions, with the goal of promoting the use of spirulina in humanitarian relief. The conventions emphasized the great value of edible micro-alga spirulina and the need to set up centres to produce it; 10 centres were envisaged, in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

61. As an emergency food, spirulina was extremely effective. It consumed 50 times less water per kilogram than was needed to produce meat. It rehabilitated victims of malnutrition three times faster than any other treatment. It was safe, and cheap to produce. Lastly, it had many positive health benefits, including a high concentration of iron, fungicidal properties and the capacity to absorb radionuclides from the body.

62. **Ms. Shapiro** (Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations (CONGO)) said that, if poverty were to be eradicated, partnerships must be established with the poor themselves. During a grass-roots consultation conducted to determine what poverty meant for poor people themselves, poverty had been defined in terms of powerlessness, lack of education, social exclusions, gender inequality, poor infrastructure and lack of land rights.

63. Non-governmental organizations should champion a rights-based approach to development, as the best means of poverty eradication. They should seek to oblige States to act in accordance with the human rights instruments they had ratified, but first they must give an authoritative definition of what the rights entailed. Thus, by checking actions against obligations, accountability would be ensured. Non-governmental organizations were excellently placed to demand accountability from governments and to lobby for a rights-based approach to development.

64. The establishment of national councils on sustainable development could enable non-governmental organizations to advise Governments, linking grass-roots action to policy formulation and debate. In addition, non-governmental organizations should hold Governments and international institutions to the commitments made at United Nations conferences.

65. With regard to the mobilization of resources, the State could not disengage itself from the provision of basic social services, such as health and sanitation. Trade liberalization and privatization of essential services such as water and electricity were among the main obstacles to development. Decentralization was a promising way of establishing new partnerships between local authorities and civil society organizations to increase democratic participation and fight poverty. The State had to transfer adequate resources to local authorities so that they could assume their responsibilities. Local authorities should be able to raise their own taxes. Given adequate resources, non-governmental organizations and local authorities could form useful partnerships for poverty eradication.

66. Creation of an enabling environment and mobilizing resources to fight poverty in the poorest countries was everyone's responsibility. Non-governmental organizations wanted, and had the capacity, to become essential partners in an era of "decentralized cooperation", working with the State and lobbying at the local, national and international levels, to achieve more effective and equitable allocation of resources to the poorest of the poor.

67. **Ms. Wells** (World Federation of United Nations Associations (WFUNA)) said that there must be much more effective coordination of the development effort, if the Millennium Development Goals — and particularly the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger — were to be achieved in the least developed countries by 2015. Her Association had been holding monthly round-table discussions on the Millennium Development Goals at the United Nations. A common theme of the discussions had been the urgent need for additional funding to be made available to the least developed countries, including their civil society sectors. One of the best ways to channel funds to civil society was through the General Voluntary Trust Fund

in support of the United Nations Informal Regional Network, and WFUNA therefore recommended that the Fund be specifically mentioned in the Council's Ministerial Declaration. The other strong message that had emerged from the various discussions was that the development effort should be home grown. There was a United Nation Association in half of the world's 50 least developed countries, and WFUNA was committed to building effective United Nations Associations in every Member State, as they played an essential role in creating an enabling environment for the eradication of poverty, and increased public knowledge about the United Nations and the Millennium Development Goals.

68. In collaboration with the North-South Institute, WFUNA conducted an annual online survey of civil society organizations, in order to assess their knowledge of and level of commitment to the Millennium Development Goals. An initial finding of the survey was that major changes would be necessary in order to alleviate poverty and hunger in the least developed countries. Debt relief was essential, as was the commitment of the countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) to the promised Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) level of 0.7 per cent of GDP, as well as tariff-free and quota-free access for their exports. The Council had undergone changes by engaging with emerging issues and experimenting with new approaches to improve its methods of work. WFUNA urged the Council to continue that process, taking fully into account the recommendations of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations Civil Society Relations and the International Labour Organization report *A Fair Globalization*.

69. **Mr. Barwett** (Rotary International) said that his organization's primary philanthropic goal was to eradicate polio worldwide by 2005. Since launching its polio eradication programme in 1985, it had helped treat more than two billion children in 122 countries. Rotary International also worked very closely with the United Nations in a wide variety of fields, and would continue to work alongside the United Nations in social and humanitarian efforts.

70. **Ms. Soanes** (ATD Fourth World) said that the world's least developed countries faced formidable challenges. The poorest sectors of society must be included from the outset in the planning and implementation of sustainable development programmes. Their life experience and knowledge could contribute to a successful partnership between the various stakeholders and could promote unity towards a common goal that was of benefit to all, including the poorest. Creating dialogue and partnerships with the poorest was an essential part of achieving sustainable development.

71. **Ms. Malaman** (Legion of Good Will) said that in March, as a complement to the Council's high-level segment, her organization had held a seminar in Brasilia to discuss how to promote the eradication of poverty in the least developed countries — particularly those of Latin America and Africa. The discussions had focused on implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, in relation to four major themes: poverty and hunger; poverty and its effect on women; HIV/AIDS and Africa's desert regions; and the establishment of a communications and information network for registering resources and sharing information about projects of interest. A number of proposals were made at the seminar, and participants had discussed the possibility of setting up a permanent forum within which to continue their dialogue.

72. *Ms. Rasi (Finland), President, resumed the Chair.*

73. **Ms. Paul** (Global Action on Aging) noted that more than 30.5 million older persons lived in the least developed countries, representing 5 per cent of their total population. In many least developed countries, older persons faced extremely difficult circumstances. Her organization urged the Council to advocate special protective measures for older persons caught in armed conflict. Although humanitarian and relief agencies, as well as the United Nations, had developed programmes to care for other vulnerable groups, such as children, women and humanitarian workers, they had little understanding of the needs of the elderly and had established virtually no programmes or guidelines for their protection. Organizations working on their behalf had expressed increasing concern and called for international organizations to take positive measures for their protection.

74. In 2000 the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees h d adopted a policy on older refugees that identified the special plight of older persons displaced in conflict. In 2002 the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing had called on Governments to protect and assist older persons caught in armed conflicts and foreign occupation. Although those

developments were encouraging, much remained to be done. The Council should use its ad hoc advisory groups to address the needs and concerns of older persons during the precarious period when countries moved from armed conflict to post-conflict and development. It should encourage United Nations agencies to gather concrete information and develop programmes to document and address the situation of older persons; promote new mandates, for United Nations agencies and the Security Council, which included the needs of older persons; determine that special measures should be taken to ensure that older persons received humane treatment and opportunities to contribute towards post-conflict reconciliation and development; and emphasize the positive contribution that older persons could make towards mediation, crisis prevention, peace-building and community solidarity.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.